Call Me Ishmael

Or a Rose by Any Other Name

J. H. HEXTER

BUT THE TROUBLE IS THAT SOMETIMES they call you Ishmael even if you change your name to Hezekiah. And what the Bard said about a rose—well, I am not so sure. By bitter experience that young Montagu fellow found out differently, and so have I.

For example, in 1963 I faced a difficult choice. I could remain at Washington University in St. Louis or take a job at Yale. Washington was then, and still is, one of the most endearing of all American universities, a fine place to work. Breaking away from eighteen years of teaching the brightest students in the country at Queens College and jettisoning the cultural and intellectual advantages of the metropolis for a declining midwestern river town and a rather obscure university six years earlier had caused me few misgivings, and there was cause for none. I was willing to deprive myself of occasional discourse with an academic dean who said, "Dr. Hexter, you must understand that we are not opposed to research here at the College" (passive sabotage of scholarship), and with my department chairman who said to a friend of mine, "We don't want to appoint X. He's a scholar. Scholars make trouble" (active hostility to learning). I found myself happier dealing with crude middle western types who, during my brief tenure as chairman, had a standard response to my attempts to enhance the academic quality of the department of history by raising salaries, making paid leaves available for scholarly work, increasing the library budget, and firing untenured deadwood: "Let's see how we can help you." So six years later it was hard to decide whether to stay at Washington or, at the age of fifty-four, to go to Yale. It usually takes me around five minutes to make up my mind about anything. This time it took me five months. Having accepted Yale's offer and moved to New Haven in 1964, I won something less than the golden opinion of my new colleagues during the next two years by habitually referring to Yale as a collective "you" and to Washington University as

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"we." When I had finally chosen, I felt that I ought to explain my decision to my old friend the chancellor at Washington, Tom Eliot. My letter to him made most of the appropriate points—the great library at Yale, especially in my field of special interest, the concentration of old friends of mine in the short strip between Boston and Washington, the itchy feet that wanted me to try one more place before I got plowed under.

It was all true enough, but I still am not sure how close I got to the whole truth, especially how much a crisis, not of identity, but of identification had to do with it. A letter from a friend at the University of Edinburgh in 1957 may show where the trouble lay. I had written him that I was moving from Queens College to Washington University. He wondered whether I would like living in the nation's capital. "No, no! That's *George* Washington University." Or the dozen-odd casual acquaintances from the Atlantic Coast who, during my happy mid-American exile, asked me whether one felt isolated, way up in the northwest corner of the country so far away from everything. "No, *not* the University of Washington in Seattle! Washington University—in St. Louis, you know." "Oh, yes, of course."

I really don't know how much all this mattered to me; but I have a hunch that it would have mattered a good deal less had I not spent the previous eighteen years on the faculty of Queens College. "Queens College? How does a Yankee like you get along in the Black Belt?" "No, no, that is the Queens College in North Carolina. This Queens College is in New York City, a city college." "Ah, I know, New York *University.*" "No, no, *not* New York University!" (It usually took at least five minutes to untangle this one.) Or: "Queens, eh? Are you going to give up your American citizenship?" "No, you are thinking of Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. I am at Queens College. In New York." "Oh-h?" (The "Oh-h?" always somehow conveyed its utterer's sense that a city slicker was trying to sneak a peculiarly metropolitan curveball past his sweet bucolic innocence.) Or most often: "Queens College? Wherezat?" "In New York." "New York City?" "Yes, sort of. Only it's not in Manhattan; it's on Long Island, you see, in the borough of Queens." "Oh, of course, Brooklyn." (To straighten this one out in ten minutes is a birdie. Usually it just does not get straightened out.) There are a lot of things you can say about Yale, and some are for and some are against; but one thing you can say for sure: When you tell someone you are at Yale, he does not ask: "In Lost Nation, Iowa?" or "In Painted Post, New York?" or "In Cambridge, Mass.?"

As I said, I do not know how much this silly consideration mattered when I made up my mind to go from Washington University (in *St. Louis*, you know) to Yale (*never* "in New Haven, you know"), but it may

have mattered some. After all, twenty-five years of explaining where you are gets pretty tiresome.

A quarter of a century of confusion over the name of the place where I worked might have been more tolerable, if it had not gone in double harness with almost half a century of confusion about the name of the person I am. That confusion goes right on to the present moment, aided and abetted by officialdom, a couple of publishing houses, and a late bureaucrat named Barnaby Keeney. It began around 1910. Before I was old enough to know what my name was, somebody started fiddling with it, and ever since, with occasional remissions, the fiddling has recurred sporadically like undulant fever. We will start at the beginning.

I was born on May 25, 1910, in Memphis, Tennessee. In the beginning I was named Milton K. Hexter. My father's name was Milton J. Hexter. His J. stood for Jacobs, his mother's maiden name. My K. stood for Kaufman, my grandfather's first name. In a family whose traditions are notorious for their irrelevance to the facts in the case, the tradition was that I was not given the name Kaufman, but just the initial K., to spare me the peril of being called Junior. My feeling is that if my parents were all that considerate, they could have named me Bartholomew or Hieronymus to save me from being called Milton, but that does not seem to have occurred to them. It did occur to my twin cousins Marian and Betsy Gates, who lived across Pauline Street from us in Memphis. They would have none of Milton. Before I can remember, they simply renamed me Jack. There is not even the customary inaccurate family tradition to explain why they hit on that particular name; but it not only stuck, it spread. Nobody in my family has ever called me anything but Jack, unless you want to count an occasional Jackie-Boy, which I do not.

Anyway, the successful campaign of the twins inaugurated the first period of nomenclatural tranquility in the turbulent history of my name: for all practical purposes I was plain Jack Hexter for five years. The peaceful time ended when my grandmother, Fannie Marks, who raised me, enrolled me in kindergarten at Avondale School in Cincinnati. Although neither before nor after did she herself ever call me anything but Jack, at this crucial point she suffered an inexplicable atavism; she signed me in to school as Milton K. Hexter. The results were appalling. Around the house, in the family, and among my close friends I was Jack. To all my teachers from kindergarten through the sixth grade I was Milton. Between the two was a broad spectrum of schoolmates who called me Milt, or, even worse, Miltie. It was a nerve-racking situation, one which doubtless has left on my psyche a hideous mass of scar tissue.

It was also a situation that I radically rectified at the earliest opportunity. That opportunity came in the seventh grade when I went from Avondale School to Walnut Hills High School. My grandmother did

not come with me to louse things up on the day I enrolled. I seized the chance and signed myself in as Jack Hexter, thus restoring the *status quo ante kindergarten.* It was a bold move for freedom and on the whole a very successful one. Of course, there were a few pockets of Milton left that needed mopping up—several schoolmates at Avondale who had to be corrected or avoided, the teachers at Sunday School who never did get squared away, and, most persistent of all, the Peoples' Bank, which eleven years later firmly closed its doors on the Bank Holiday of 1933, with the account of Milton K. Hexter inside, and never opened them again. But taken all in all, the period that began when I enrolled at Walnut Hills was the longest stretch of nomenclatural peace I have ever enjoyed. It lasted through my six years there, through three years at the University of Cincinnati, and four in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard. (The dean of the graduate school had some trouble with "Jack" in working out the Latin names on the M.A. diploma and wrote to ask me whether I preferred Johannes or Jacobus. I forget what I told him, and the only evidence, the diploma itself, is long lost. Anyway, that was the dean's problem, not mine.)

My trouble started again one unfortunate evening in my fourth year of graduate work when I went to a meeting of the Graduate History Club. (The History Club was mainly for the canaille, of whom I was one. It was open to all graduate students in history, and it was a very dull organization. The Star Chamber, the other graduate history club, was just as dull, but more exclusive; it was open only by invitation. I was not invited.) At History Club meetings we listened to a paper usually by a faculty member or a distinguished visiting fireman. When it was over, we stood around and wondered whether a faculty member would speak to us. This rarely happened; faculty members at Harvard were not much addicted to speaking to graduate students in the good old days.

For me that particular meeting was a catastrophic exception to the rule. Professor Wilbur Abbott emerged out of the haze of ennui and unease surrounding me, planted himself squarely before me, cleared his throat, and mumbled something. I did not quite catch it, or at least did not want to think I had quite caught it. He seemed to be saying something about changing my name.

"Pardon me?"

"I said you'd better change your name."

"Change my *name*?"

"Yes, change your name!"

"But I don't want to change my name, sir."

"Better change it anyhow." He was stubborn.

"But, sir, there's nothing wrong with the name Hexter." I, too, was stubborn.

"Oh, Hexter is all right. It's Jack that's the trouble. It won't do."

"What's wrong with Jack? I don't see anything wrong with Jack either." After all, it was a name I had fought and bled a good deal for.

"It won't do." Still stubborn.

"But what is wrong with it?" I, too, was stubborn still.

"I'll tell you what's wrong with it, Hexter," said Professor Abbott reasonably but wearily and with obviously diminishing patience. "Someday you may be a pretty good historian. No one will believe that anybody named Jack is a good historian."

I must admit that I never thought I would have to face such a problem. In this matter, as in a good many others, Professor Abbott was eccentric. None of his colleagues in the department of history shared his temperately roseate view of my prospects. It was a point on which, on the face of the evidence, I inclined to the opinion of the overwhelming majority. In my first year as a graduate student in history at Harvard, after majoring in English at the University of Cincinnati, I had but an A, a couple of A−'s, and five B-level grades, one B−− in Renaissance and Reformation. In a place where two B's were taken to show that a graduate student was a basket case, I had dropped out of the bottom of the basket.

"But, Professor Abbott, let's face it; I may not be a good historian," I replied, hiding my future indicative convictions under a subjunctive cushion. "Then I'll have changed my name for nothing. And I like being called Jack. I am just the sort of fellow people call Jack."

He firmed his jaw slightly. "Well, that's too bad. Still, you are going to have to change it."

The time had obviously come for a retreat to unprepared lines. Abbott was my dissertation supervisor; and undue intransigence about such a trifle as one's name was not advisable if it ran counter to the orders of one's supervisor. I thought hard and fast.

"Look, how about my using a middle initial?"

"What good would that do?"

"Well, then I could just sign what I wrote with my first and second initials and my last name."

He turned this idea slowly over in his mind. Then a little grudgingly, "I guess that might work. What is your middle name?"

"I haven't got one," I said. I said it fast, because I was not sure it was true. In the multiple metamorphoses of my names I was not quite certain about the current ontological status of K. for Kaufman, but I did know for sure that I wanted no further truck with it. I certainly did not want to go into the philosophical problem it raised with Professor Abbott. Anyhow, I thought I had him stymied. But not for long.

"I have a spare one," he said.

"Pardon?"

"I have a spare middle name. I don't use it. You could have it."

"I don't really want a middle name, Sir, just a middle initial."

"All right. I won't give you the name. The initial is H., you can use that."

"Thank you, Sir," I said.

"You are welcome," he replied.

And that was that. We both were good to our side of the bargain. Professor Abbott never told me what his middle name was, then or later. Neither has anyone else, so I don't know what the H. stands for. And from that day to this I have done my damnedest to transform myself into J. H. Hexter for official and professional purposes, while hanging on to Jack in personal relations, as per agreement.

The trouble is—let's face it—I have failed. The fight that I thought was won and over when Professor Abbott and I reached our compromise settlement was for me just a beginning that now, nearly fifty years later, has not ended. But the returns are really in; this is one I am not going to win. The time remaining to me is too short; there is too much going against me, and there always has been—the random flak, the publishers, the bureaucrats, the family, and the late Barnaby Keeney.

The random flak can come from almost anywhere, mainly from people who do not know what the J. stands for, but are willing to back their guess—like Tom Cochran at Penn to whom, for three decades, I was James or Jim according to no discernible principle. (Under these circumstances I thought it a little much when the term he chose to describe a book of mine he reviewed was "idiosyncratic.") Or Tom Easterbrook at Toronto, who always called me Jack but who, when he sent the program of the Economic History Association meeting to the printer in 1957, opted for John H.

With publishers it is different; they have defeated me by the massive force of sheer stupidity. By 1967 I had written four books, and they had issued two with my name wrong. In 1962 Longmans in England published my *Reappraisals in History*. The galley proofs came in—*John* H. Hexter on the title page. I made the appropriate correction—J. H. Hexter. The page proofs, when they came, had it right—J. H. Hexter. The book came—J. H. Hexter on the title page; J. H. Hexter on the dust jacket; all was well. A few days after I got my author's copies, one slipped out of my hand. The dust jacket slid off. There, smirking at me from the spine of the book, was John (no middle initial) Hexter. And then in 1966, Harper and Row published *The Judaeo Christian Tradition*—by J. A. Hexter. I don't know what the A. stands for, but then I don't know what the H. stands for either. It is just that I committed myself to it a long while back and that I would like a touch of name

stability and identifiability in my declining years. In my next three books they got the name right, but those books have gone out of print. (I seem to get worse as I grow older.) Of the ones still in print, that leaves me three out of five, or 600, in a league where most players can anticipate a lifetime average of 1000. I can't catch up.

With the bureaucrats, private and public, I never can tell in advance. Banks, academic administrations, and the Veterans Administration are reasonable. J. H. is okay with them on bank deposits and checks, and in university catalogues. The wartime army would not take J. H. or Jack H. I had to be plain Jack. They did not believe in initials and especially not in a middle initial with no name hooked on to it. It might have been different if Harry S. (for nothing) Truman had been commander in chief when I was inducted in 1942; but D. stood for Delano, didn't it, so what the hell did H. stand for? Insurance companies, title guarantee companies, the Internal Revenue Service, and the passport office tolerate the H., but they want a first name, and they won't take no for an answer. And willy-nilly at the end of all my earthly tribulation, I will have to reconcile myself with dying Jack H. Hexter. That is the way the lawyers and the trust company said it had to be, and that is the way it is in my last will and testament.

The family got its licks in early. A year after the Abbott-Hexter pact, I was—given my academic record at Harvard—predictably unemployed. I headed for England for several months of research. That raised the need for a passport. The passport office insists on having evidence that you have been born and that you are you. The authorities in Memphis, perhaps with prescient intimations that my name was Big Trouble had lost track of my birth certificate, or burned its vital statistics for 1910, or fed them to the rats. So my father had to submit an affidavit that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, I was born and I was I. What he submitted was an affidavit that Milton K. Hexter was born and that I was Milton K. Hexter. So that long-buried ghost rose again and tried to start a new life for himself via my new passport. He never really had a chance; I was not about to give him one. He survived his reanimation, however, just long enough to make a damn nuisance of himself by setting me on a collision course with the American Express Company.

The trouble boiled up over the Christmas checks from my grandmother, my father, and my three aunts. They were made out to five different fellows named Hexter. My grandmother had gotten the terms of the pact straight. Hers was to J. H.; Father's was to Milton K.; Aunt Carrie's was to Jack; Aunt Cora's to Jack H.; and Aunt Gertie, vague to the last, sent hers to J. M. (She should have been a publisher.) There followed a series of unnerving confrontations with a minor executive at American Express in London, as the checks came in one by one, and I

tried to cash them one by one. It was clear enough to the executive that I was I; the question was who was I, and how was I related to all those other fellows named Hexter, who were getting checks from people named severally Marks, Hexter, Guggenheim, Frauenthal, and Mook. And considering the circumstances, how much confidence did I expect him to have in my bare assertion that all the check-receiving Hexters were I and I they? There was a sort of mounting crisis of confidence each time I showed up at the Haymarket office with a new variation on the Hexter theme. It reached its crescendo on the fourth check and somehow abruptly descended to diminuendo on the fifth. By then my claim to be all those Hexters attained a measure of credibility through the sheer excess of its own preposterousness.

It was during my stay in London and after the Christmas trouble that unwittingly I set in train the nomenclatural disaster associated with the late Barnaby Keeney. I was feeling pretty good at the time. Those checks with all those names on them had turned into nice negotiable pounds and shillings, after all. As far as my name went, the worst was over, I thought. At the moment the story of how I acquired it might make a mildly amusing yarn. In that spirit and in all innocence, I told it one day at lunch to two acquaintances from Harvard, Ted Lampson and John Coddington, who, like me, were doing research in the British Museum. My guess was right; they were mildly amused. They were also mildly curious.

"I wonder what the H. stands for," said John.

"Yes, I wonder," said Ted.

I answered that I neither wondered nor cared.

"Wilbur Abbott," Ted mused, "Wilbur C. Abbott. He kept the C. and dropped the H. What does the C. stand for?"

"Cortez," said John, who was always up on things like that. "Wilbur Cortez Abbott."

"Wilbur Cortez Abbott. Wilbur Cortez H. Abbott. Wilbur H. Cortez Abbott," Ted continued, trying them out for size.

"Wilbur *H. Cortez* Abbott!" said John, infernal enlightenment glowing in his eyes. "Of course! Well, well. I'll be damned."

"Of course," Ted exclaimed. "That's it. That has to be it!"

"What has to be what?" I said, a little irked. They were too old to be giggling that way. "What the hell is so funny?"

"Your middle name, my boy, your middle name," said John.

"What middle name? I don't have any middle name."

"Oh, yes, you do, my boy," said Ted. "Yes, you do, my old conquistador!"

"Your old what?"

"Wilbur Cortez Abbott," John explained patiently. "Wilbur *H.* Cortez

Abbott. *H.* Cortez. Hernando Cortez. Jack, my friend, your middle name is Hernando."

"Jack Hernando Hexter," Ted murmured. "Ah, well, into each life some rain must fall. *Hasta la vista.*"

"I'm off too. Don't take it too hard, J. H.," said John. "Bite the bullet."

I was not in any hurry to go. I felt the need to sit around a while and get myself adjusted to what the world would be like for a man who was moving toward his thirties with the newly acquired middle name of Hernando. On the whole, the prospect did not seem promising. I remembered a friend once telling me about a vagrant uncle who, he said, "suddenly turned up dead in Bellevue." I could not quite make out why, but somehow that uncle's predicament and mine seemed similar. Of course, there was always a chance that Ted and John were wrong. It didn't *have* to be Hernando. There were after all *hundreds* of names that began with H. *Of course.* The trouble was that of all those names, the one most likely to be found in company with Cortez was Hernando. I could not figure any way around that, because there was no way around it.

Moreover, at the time I couldn't do anything about it. There was no way of checking on it. I was going to France in about two weeks; sea mail to America was the only kind of mail there was in those days, and in the winter it always took more than two weeks for sea mail to do a round trip from London to Cambridge, Mass. No mail would reach me in France. It would be well over a month before I could get back to Cambridge. And anyhow I was not really sure I wanted to find out. I was stuck dead center between discomfort with the uncertainty and discomfort at the notion that uncertainty might be better than the possible awful truth—like the man who is not sure he wants to hear the doctor's diagnosis for fear that the disease may be mortal. I settled down as well as I could to living with the suspense. It gave me a poignant insight into what a rotten deal poor old Damocles had.

I wasted no time after the boat docked in New York. I took the first train out for Boston, deposited my traveling bags and my case of Scotch in the flat of Cliff Mannal, off whom I was sponging, and was inside Abbott's office by 3:00 P.M. The boss was not there, but his secretary, Catherine Crane, was.

I did not waste any time on ceremonious exchanges of greetings. "Look," I said to her, "is his name Hernando?"

"Hello, Jack, did you have a nice trip?" said Mrs. Crane.

Her sense of the proprieties and priorities was preposterous. "Yes, great," I answered. "Is his name really Hernando?"

"Is whose name what?"

"His. Professor Abbott's. Is it Hernando?"

"Professor Abbott's?"

"Yes. That middle initial he doesn't use any more. H., you know. Does it stand for Hernando?"

"Why should it? Oh, I get it—Cortez. No, it doesn't. As a matter of fact, it's not Wilbur H. Cortez; it's Wilbur Cortez H. The H. stands for . . . "

"Whoa. Hold it. I don't want to know what the H. stands for. I just wanted to know one thing it didn't stand for—Hernando. You've taken a load off my mind. Thanks."

"You're welcome. Now, to get back to where I started, how was your trip?"

I told her in somewhat greater detail than before how the trip was. I also told the now-extended and improved story of my troubles with my name to quite a lot of people. Not the Milton part. I had buried that in the American Express office in the Haymarket, and I wanted no more to do with it. Just the story of the H. and the Lampson-Coddington discovery of what, happily for me, turned out to be fool's gold. What harm could telling that do? So I told it to my girl, Marion, and my roommates, Cliff Mannal and Herb Robbins, and my friend Wex, and to Ed Popper, and to a somewhat raffish acquaintance, Barney Keeney, once a pretty good distance runner at the University of North Carolina, who was transmuting himself into a pretty good medievalist at Harvard. . .

Early in 1964, I got a letter from Doctor Barnaby C. (for Conrad) Keeney, President of Brown University, A.B. (North Carolina), A.M., Ph.D. (Harvard), D.Sc. (Bryant College), L.H.D. (Ohio University), Ed.D. (Rhode Island College of Education), LL.D. (eleven assorted institutions, including Providence [R.I.] College and the University of Rhode Island—Dr. Keeney was obviously Big in Rhode Island, but then Rhode Island is not a very big state), and J. D. from Portia Law School, where I assume he played Shylock. He had come a long piece from his birthplace in Halfway, Oregon. I had not lost track of Dr. Keeney in his years between graduate school and university presidency. I ran into him at the first American Historical Association meeting I attended after I got my first permanent job at Queens. He was an instructor at Harvard. It was late afternoon, and I had just arrived.

"Hi, Barney," I said.

"Hi, Jack," said Barney. "You look thirsty."

"*We* look thirsty."

"You had better check your bag first." I checked my bag. I unchecked it reasonably early the next morning.

From that time on, with an intermission for the war in which I was a stateside soldier and Barney some kind of hero, we dedicated ourselves for more than a decade to preventing the spirits of the AHA from drying

up. Years later I even attended Barney's installation as president of Brown. At the previous meeting of the AHA when the news of the improbable appointment was out, Mary Handlin and I put in a good bit of time lamenting in Barney's presence his imminent apotheosis into a stuffed shirt, an unselfish concern for his spiritual condition that he did not appear fully to appreciate. So when I found out that I could hit Queens College, where I taught then, for the expense of my trip to Providence, I figured I ought to go for auld lang syne. It was quite an occasion, made special not by the mass of dull dignitaries who are always around for such affairs but by the presence of a sizable delegation of Barney's old cronies, an assortment of odd characters who felt a personal interest in the proceedings. Most of them ordinarily would have headed for the hills at the faintest suggestion that anyone might try to rope them into attending the installation of a university president. With Barnaby it was different. None of those who knew him best could believe that he would actually make it, unless they saw him do it with their own eyes. Among them were a considerable number with a financial interest in the affair. They had laid long odds against anything so improbable happening. They were not about to pay off on a base of evidence as flimsy and unreliable as a newspaper report. They had to see the event happen with their naked eye. There are even rumors that a few who sat through the whole ceremony still required affidavits before they would settle up, on the grounds that there are occasions when reason and probability require a man to reject the evidence of his senses.

Barnaby made it, however, and no doubt just to falsify Mary Handlin's and my prophecy, he did not turn into a stuffed shirt. The consensus is that he provided Brown with a highly individual, somewhat eccentric, but most successful administration for ten years. One who suffered, enjoyed, and survived administration à la Keeney tried to catch its peculiar flavor, to describe what it was like for a faculty member. "It was," he said meditatively, "like being on a wild ride on an endless roller coaster, not having the slightest idea what the hell was going to happen next, yet knowing deep down that you were as safe as gold in Ft. Knox. Barney had the singular gift of going square down the middle of the road and making everybody with him believe it was Wonderland."

I did not completely lose touch with Barnaby even after he became a university president. In 1958 he asked me to teach a summer class at Brown. When I accepted, he offered me and my family lodging in the president's house, which he would not be occupying during our stay. After I explained to him my intention to rent rooms and to erect a modest neon sign, "Presidential Motel," at the gate, he chickened out. Instead he provided us with quarters in a faculty suite in a new dormitory complex with arrangements for us to extend occupancy as far down the

corridor as our hospitality to visiting friends required. His subsequent claims that we filled a whole floor and that after our tenancy the cost of repairs came to twice my pay is at least half false; we never had more than fifteen people in at one time. And his point about repairs merely reflected the meagerness of my summer salary.

So when I got a letter from President Keeney early in 1964, I was not surprised. I was surprised at its contents—and pleased. It invited me to speak for a half hour at the Brown Bicentennial Celebration in October in return for a fairly princely stipend. In my letter of acceptance, I indicated that in view of the disproportion of the reward to the service demanded, I assumed that some small kickback was expected and that I was ready to be reasonable. I also pointed out to him that he might find it embarrassing if his board of trustees learned how deep his hand was into the till. Of course, no blackmail threat was intended. Still, when a few days later a further letter offered to cut the stipend in half and indicated that in any case an honorary degree of D. Litt. was to be thrown in with it, I did speculate on the possibility of a cause and effect relation. On this point, as it turned out, I was entirely on the wrong track. Barnaby had other reasons.

On October 4 the convocation of Brown University gathered to hear President Lyndon B. Johnson deliver an address and to witness the granting of honorary degrees on the occasion of the university's two-hundredth anniversary. Among those listed to receive such degrees was J. H. Hexter, Ph.D., Professor of History, Yale University. He had a seat in the front row. President Johnson delivered his brief address, announcing plans for the provision of federal funds for the support of the humanities (reasonably wild applause led by faculty members engaged in literary and historical research). Then having more pressing business to attend to at the moment (namely, the efficient and massive clobbering of poor dear Senator Goldwater), President Johnson departed before the awarding of the honorary degrees. About half an hour later the marshal got down the list as far as my name.

"Professor J. H. Hexter, come forward."

I walked up the steps to the platform and stood face-to-face with Dr. Barnaby C. Keeney. The marshal went on to utter some further ceremonial formulae. I did not catch what he said. I was anxiously scrutinizing Barnaby and was apprehensive about what I saw. He had added considerable poundage since his elevation to the presidency of Brown, and encased in gorgeous academic robes, he looked like an unreliable Irish rogue elephant, swathed in a brown and orange silk tent, with a brown tam-ó'-shanter unsteadily perched on its head. He had a glitter in his eye, at once steely and wild, that I had seen often enough before to know it boded no good. There was trouble ahead, no doubt, but I could

not figure what. The marshal had finished saying whatever he had said.

Barnaby stared at me like a basilisk and intoned, "Jack HERNANDO Hexter." He came down on the second name like a pile driver.

He continued with the citation preceding the granting of the degree, but again I missed it. I was choked by an incompatible mixture of emotions—astonishment, fury, shock, and admiration. It was a first for Barnaby, all right. He was the first university president in history to give somebody an honorary degree entirely for the sake of a one-line gag. It was at least symptomatic of a strange but splendid character disorder. I had just gotten that far in my meditation when someone draped over my shoulders the Brown University hood of a D. Litt. At the same moment Barnaby released into my left hand the engraved leather-bound copy of the citation he had just recited. He beamed at me with what from the spectator's angle of vision must have looked like benevolence. I tilted slightly forward on the balls of my feet, beamed back with what from the spectator's point of view must have looked like affection, and said to him between clamped teeth, "Barney, you son of a bitch."

Now I had a first to my credit. I was the first Doctor of Letters in history who at the very moment of receiving the degree had called the man who presented it to him a son of a bitch. Barnaby, still beaming, took my right hand in his and shook it with apparent warmth at the same time saying, "Easy, Jack, it's an open mike." I returned to my seat.

It was an open mike all right. Not, fortunately, to the audience in the hall, but to the broadcasting network that was carrying the bicentennial ceremonies. Barnaby wrote me a note a few days later to assure me that we actually had been on the air, a fact subsequently confirmed by other and more reliable witnesses. He also chided me for what he described as my "vile language" and ended his letter, "Well, Jack, you will long be remembered in these Plantations." I tended to think that he might be right, but I did not feel very badly about it. In a day of firsts, I had perhaps scored the crowning one. I realize that my initial attempt fully to comprehend the dimensions of my achievement by comparing it with that of Herostratus, who burned the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, was not quite appropriate. That is indeed a thing that could be done only once. It is at least possible that at some future time another recipient of an honorary degree at the moment of receiving it will call the president who awards it to him a son of a bitch in the hearing of an audience that potentially includes a large part of the population of southern New England. Possible, but on the whole, I think, not very likely.

From a merely dramatic point of view, the story should end here. Unfortunately for me, I am not a dramatist, but a historian. I cannot choose to end my story at the point most appropriate to the exigencies of dramatic presentation; I am bound to fidelity to the historical record.

And that record requires me to press further, since it unmistakably shows that in fact the story did not end here.

In 1965 Dr. Barnaby Keeney resigned as president of Brown University. In that year Lyndon Johnson recommended support for the humanities to Congress, making good on his pledge at the Brown bicentennial. In that year, to no one's great surprise, Dr. Barnaby Keeney was appointed the first director of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Before he fled to Washington, I went to Providence to see Barney. I had business with him. We conducted it somewhat erratically in the intervals between Barney's shots in a game of bottle pool, in which he was efficiently massacred by an associate professor. While ill-naturedly taking his lumps, Barney limped about the table alibiing his hopeless performance. Implausibly he claimed that he was handicapped by lack of practice and a game leg, which he alleged he had gotten while fishing in Honduras. His story was received with undisguised and scornful skepticism by the academic slaves over whom he no longer held the whip hand.

Despite a few difficulties of communication caused by Barney's preoccupation with the game, the two of us had an almost immediate meeting of minds. It was a pure case of symbiosis. Each of us had something the other needed. I had a sound sensible project for editing at Yale the parliamentary diaries for the Parliament of 1628, the Parliament that passed the Petition of Right, which was later to become a basis for the claims to liberty of the British colonists in North America. Barney needed and wanted projects for the National Endowment of which members of Congress could readily make sense. For this purpose my project was a natural. I needed and wanted money. As director of the Endowment, Barney would soon have money. The match of our reciprocal purposes was so evident that we had finished our business well before Barney's disaster at the pool table had wound to its dreary consummation.

In September 1966 the National Endowment announced its grant of $35,980 to Yale University for the editing of the parliamentary diaries for 1628. I received what purported to be the press release of the Endowment's announcement of the grant. I here quote verbatim an excerpt from the document I received.

"Because of its importance to the history of American constitutional rights, the National Endowment for the Humanities today announced a grant of $35,980 to Yale University to initiate a project, under the direction of Jack Hernando Hexter, Professor of History (who is best known for his book, *Reappraisals in History*, which consists in good part of articles rejected by leading journals) to edit the manuscripts, . . . " I showed the document to my wife. We were both amused by it. It was

obviously a gag release faked by Barney for our entertainment. He was a man who would go a long way for a joke. A few days later I received from Congressman Mathias a kind note congratulating me on the award of funds for the project. It began,

Professor Jack Hernando Hexter
Department of History
Yale University

The Shadow had struck again.

I am nearing age seventy-three and back at Washington University in St. Louis. In the past quarter century I have done myself two strokes, two coronary occlusions, two major hemorrhages, three bouts of pneumonia, and one dental extraction. It figures that I will be getting off the train pretty soon. Though hell on wheels for most, it has been a good trip for me, made more lively on occasion by encounters with Barney Keeney. No more of those though. He detrained himself a few years back. Stroke.

As to the Bard, on thinking it over, he had the thing part right and part not so right. It is, I would agree, true that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but then I don't spend much time smelling roses. All the same, there is something in a name, and as long as there are the likes of Montagus and Barnaby Conrad Keeneys around, there will continue to be something in a name. A name, for instance, like J. (FOR JACK, NOT JOHN) (NOT MILTON K. OR MILTON KAUFMAN) H. (NOT FOR HERNANDO BUT FOR GOD AND CATHERINE CRANE ONLY KNOW AND I DON'T WANT TO KNOW WHAT) HEXTER.